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ABSTRACT

Findings of research focused on children and youth at risk for child abuse and neglect are summarized in this report. Entries are organized under the following four general headings: (1) definition and incidence of maltreatment of children and youth, (2) explanations of maltreatment, (3) systematic dysfunctions in handling maltreatment cases, and (4) interventions and their effectiveness. The pages of the summary are organized in columns: the first column lists the findings, the second lists bibliographic information, and the third provides interpretations of the findings. (RH)

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CHILDREN AND YOUTH AT RISK

A Synthesis of the
Research and Comments

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CHILDREN AND YOUTH AT RISK

Introductory Comments

Since 1962 and the appearance of the "Battered Child Syndrome" in the American Journal of Medicine by F. Harry Kempe and associates, there has been literally a proliferation of studies addressing the complex topic of "Children and Youth at Risk." This paper synthesizes what are considered generally agreed upon findings and presents a format that other researchers may review in order to arrive at a consensus on the findings. Then, they may identify critical areas for additional evidence as needed and may consider research initiatives.

The flaw in this assignment, at least as it pertained to this investigator's efforts, is the assumption that there are, in the research on "Children and Youth at Risk," generally accepted findings. In almost every case of a major research effort in which findings are made, contradictory evidence exists that challenges the findings or the interpretations given to those findings by the individual researchers. Possibly the most serious problem has been the criticisms of the validity of the research methodologies employed, which, if accepted, would eliminate most, if not all, the research studies undertaken to date.

Many experts in the field have pointed out these methodological problems in summarization of research findings (Antler et al.,1980; Belsky, 1980; Bourne & Newberger, 1979; Gelles, 1973; Hurt, 1974; Light, 1973; Simpkins, 1978; Smith et al., 1980; Stein, 1979; White, 1973; and Zigler & Seitz, 1980). Briefly, these challenges to the validity of the research on vulnerable children and youth suggest that:

1. Studies, in most instances, are post hoc (ex post facto), providing little or questionable data on families prior to the onset of child maltreatment, usually focussing on one or two factors, and using a wide variation in sampling methods.

2. Wide disparity exists in definitions of child maltreatment that lack differentiation of various types of maltreatment, and use broad categories lacking specification.

3. Case records are used in many studies that are subject to inaccuracies that affect the validity of findings that include data from these sources.

4. Parent, child or professional recall is used to establish circumstances surrounding the maltreatment incidents that are subject to distortion.

5. There is lack of evidence in support of predicting likely future consequences of either specific parent or child characteristics or behavior.

6. The systemic labeling process, in which initial allegations are made and subsequent evidence gathered to substantiate those allegations, often overlooks substantive evidence of normal childrearing behaviors.

7. Discriminatory nature of reporting systems of child maltreatment in which lower social economic status families are more likely to be reported.

8. Systemic dysfunctions in the handling of child maltreatment by the variety of agencies and professionals operating on different criteria based on conflicting value orientations.

In general, this investigator supports these methodological criticisms but neither time, resources or present commitment exist to undertake a bold redirection of sponsored research in this complex area, nor are there assurances that more rigorous short- and long-range studies would provide the desired knowledge base regarding causation, appropriate policies, and effective multilevel interventions to assure a safe nurturing environment for children and youth who are identified at risk. At least, the present research findings have challenged some of the myths and assumptions that abound in this particular area, and we are more aware of what we do not know. Even though the present research cannot meet scientific empirical standards as a whole, many of the studies suggest insights into the complex phenomena and point up a beginning consensus when one attempts to synthesize and bring together these findings. It has to be said that this synthesis is more a work of art than an attempt at scientific analysis. Over 200 studies have been reviewed and organized under the following general headings:

I. Definition and Incidence of Maltreatment of Children and Youth
II. Explanations of Maltreatment
III. Systemic Dysfunctions in Handling Maltreatment Cases
IV. Interventions and Their Effectiveness

Findings	Source	Interpretation
I. Incidence of Maltreatment		
Best guess estimate that a minimum of 652,000 children (and youth) suffer some form of harmful maltreatment each year.	Westat, Inc. National incidence study of child abuse and neglect. Washington, DC: DHHS National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect, 1981.	Study emphasized actual harm rather than potential harm, which significantly altered previous estimates of incidents of maltreatment.
No difference between whites and blacks in the proportion of maltreated children.		By excluding institutions, private physicians, private schools, mental health and other private agencies, estimates of incidence are considered low.
Higher incidence occurs in lower socioeconomic classes with poor white children more at risk than poor blacks.	Pelton, L.H. The social contact of child abuse and neglect. Sciences Press, 1980.	Classlessness myth of child maltreatment exploded.
Incidence of adolescent abuse and neglect more than double the rate of younger children.	Fisher, B., & Berdie, J. Adolescent abuse and neglect: Issues of incidence, intervention and service delivery. San Francisco, CA: Urban and Rural System Associates, 1979.	More attention must be paid to adolescent abuse and neglect.
Roughly an equal number of abuse and neglect cases.	Garbarino, J., & Carson, B. Mistreated youth vs. abused children. Issues for protective services. Prepublication draft: Boys Town, NE, Center for Youth Development, 1980.	Use of actual harm standard reduces ratio of neglect cases (previously reported as 4-1) to abuse cases.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Educational neglect involved in 27.8% (181,500) of cases.	Institute of Judicial Administration--American Bar Association. Standards relating to abuse and neglect. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1977.	First time incidence of educational neglect has been documented.
Accuracy of detection...reluctance of persons to report...variability in statutory definitions from state to state.	Smith, C.P., Berkman, D., & Fraser, W. A preliminary national assessment of child abuse and neglect and juvenile justice system. Washington, DC: National Institute for Juvenile Justice Delinquency, April 1980.	Difficult to have much confidence in studies of child abuse and neglect.
Abuse not increased...only the identification and reporting of abuse has increased.	Gil, D.S. Child abuse prevention act. Journal of Clinical Child Psycholcgy, 1973, 3, 7-10.	Societal change would bring about reduction in incidence of child abuse rather than focusing on individual cases.
Serious abuse only small proportion of reported cases.	Kadushin, A., Martin, J., & Mc Gloin, J. Child abuse: An interactional event. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1981.	
200,000 to 500,000 children abused annually...add neglect and sex abuse, 1 out of every 100 children are victims.	Light, R.J. Abused and neglected children in America: A study of alternate policies. Harvard Educational Review, 1973, 43, 556-599.	Suggests availability of crisis centers... and community education of the general populace in a preventive effort.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Using epidemiological approach prevalence of a-use and neglect (reported and unreported) Abuse: Mean 166,702; Highest projection 259,573 Neglect: Mean 444,982*; Highest projection 1,240,894** *Use National Sample **Based on highest jurisdiction	Nagi, S. Child maltreatment in the United States. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1977.	Increases related to the emergence of the nuclear family resulting in stresses, lack of relief in parenting, and social isolation.
State Central Registries 1967: Abuse 9,565; Neglect 5,993; Other 3,570 1968: Abuse 10,931; Neglect 6,617; Other 4,314	Gil, D.S. Violence against children: Physical abuse in the United States. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970.	No mother should be expected to care for her children around the clock, 365 days a year. Substitute care mechanisms should be routinely available to offer mothers opportunities for carefree rest and recreation.
Problems with incidence studies are that information from different states is not comparable; reports are subject to extent of public awareness, reflect an institutional bias with power classes over represented, estimates based on data from different sources and abuse and neglect incidents subject to misdiagnosis.	Holmes, M., & Tapper, D. Child abuse and neglect programs: Practice and theory. Washington DC: DHEW National Institute of Mental Health, 1977.	It is highly doubtful that incidence studies can generate any valid estimates of the incidence of maltreatment of children and youth.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Definitions of Maltreatment		
The existence of an adequate definition of abuse and/or neglect is central to entire system of service delivery to abusive and neglectful families.	Ibid.	There is a gap between the broad definitions in the literature and the much narrower definitions used by child abuse and neglect programs.
Legal definition of abuse and neglect falls far short of providing the operating definitions necessary for intervention decisions.		
Provide wide discretion in interpretation and application.	McCulloh, R. American Justice Institute. Abuse and neglect: Comparative analysis of standards and state practices. Washington, DC: National Institute for Juvenile Justice, 1977. (Publication No. 027-000-00549-7)	Need to delineate specifically permissible bases for intervention... statutory grounds for coercive intervention should be defined as specifically as possible.
Physical abuse of children is the intentional, nonaccidental use of physical force, or intentional, nonaccidental acts of omission on the part of caretaker, interacting with the child in his care, aimed at hurting, injuring, or destroying that child.	Gil, D.S. Violence against children, op. cit.	
Abuse consists of inflicted gaps or deficits between circumstances of living which would facilitate the optimal	Gil, D.S. Unraveling child abuse. Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1975, 45(3), 346-356.	Definition includes societal agents as well as individuals as perpetrators of abuse.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
development of children to which they should be entitled and their actual circumstances, irrespective of the sources or agents of the deficits.		
Neglect is a condition in which a caretaker responsible for the child either deliberately or by extraordinary inattentiveness permits the child to experience avoidable present suffering, and/or fails to provide one or more of the ingredients generally deemed essential for developing a person's physical, intellectual and emotional capabilities.	Polansky, N., Holly, C., & Polansky, N. Profile of neglect. Washington, DC: DHEW Social and Rehabilitation Services, 1975.	
	Holmes, M., & Tapper, D., op. cit.	Neglect cases far outnumber abuse cases because of their more chronic nature... found to be more persistent and less amenable to treatment.
The social construction of child abuse is the process by which (a) a definition of abuse is constructed, (b) certain judges or gatekeepers are selected for applying the definition, (c) the definition is applied by designating labels "abused"and "abuser" to particular individuals and families.	Gelles, R. The social construction of child abuse. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1975, 45, 363-371.	These factors affect who is labeled an abuser as well as what the causes of abuses are considered to be.
Neglect is a failure in meeting community expectations of the duties of the parental role but sustained by a number of factors --some in the parents, some in their environment.	Billingsley, A., Giovannoni, J., & Purvine, M. Studies in child protective services--Final report. Washington, DC: DHEW Children's Bureau, September 1969.	More exacting definitions of child neglect not needed...need to relinquish notion of child neglect as a static, discreet, diagnostic entity...as much a manifestation of social and community conditions...as any individual parent's pathology.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
	Katz, S.N. When parents fail: The child's response to family breakdown. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1971.	The negative approach to various definitions of neglect indicate only what is undesirable.
Definitional disagreements caused by denial or avoidance by the observer, viewed as culturally relative, influenced by professional work settings or lack of knowledge of child development.	Johnson, C. Child abuse in the Southeast: Analysis of 1172 reported cases. Athens, GA: Regional Institute for Social Welfare Research, 1974.	Disagreements result in lack of specificity in definitions of abuse and neglect.
The community tremendously influences the working definition of neglect and abuse.	Koerin, B. Child abuse and neglect. Changing policies and perspectives. Child Welfare, November 1980, 59.	Economic and ethnic factors reasons for reporting whether or not neglect and abuse occur among lower income families.
56% of child protective service workers and 64% of police agreed that it is difficult to say what is and what is not child maltreatment.	Nagi, S., op. cit.	Open and diffuse definition and criteria for child maltreatment invite unsystematic collection of evidence...and introduces subjectivity as what evidence is.
Finding facts to fit a label tends to be process of responding to a few deviant details set within a panoply of entirely acceptable conduct.	Newberger, E., & Bourne, R. Medicalization and legalization of child abuse. In E. Newberger & R. Bourne (Eds.) Critical perspectives on child abuse. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, D.C. Heath Publishers, 1979.	Definition or classification should conceptualize strengths as well as pathology in families and children.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Classification/Differentiation of Child Maltreatment		
Profiles of abuse and neglect make insufficient distinction between abusing and nonabusing families.	Light, R.J., op. cit.	
Different kinds of abusers have different profiles.		
Different kinds of child maltreatment do not result in different case management policies.		
63% of abuse related to accidental disciplinary measures.	Gil, D.S. Physical abuse of children: Findings and implications of a national survey. Pediatrics, Vol. 45, 857-864.	An effort should be made to systematically educate parents about other means of behavioral control...while establishing clear-cut prohibitions against use of physical force in childrearing.
Police, protective services workers, pediatricians and attorneys virtually have no consensus about the relative seriousness of incidents of maltreatment...achieved a consensus about relative seriousness of broad categories of abuse and neglect.	Giovannoni, J., & Becerra, R. Defining child abuse. New York, NY: Free Press, 1979.	These areas of agreement can provide the basis for developing guidelines for handling maltreatment cases across essential disciplines.
Doctors and nurses independently concurred in only 50% of child maltreatment cases. Nurses tendency to label abuse based on observations of home situation.	Holter, J.C., & Friedman, S. Child abuse: Early case findings in the emergency department. Pediatrics, 1968, 42, 128-138.	Placing a child in a suspected abuse category is only a clinical judgment and only long-term followup with family will tell.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Out of 380 maltreating families receiving public assistance, only 28 showed no evidence of neglect. Centrality of material level of living, in a complex set of factors that result in child maltreatment, is the primary determinant of coping behavior. Neglect is identified as the more prevalent and/or severe problem.	Wolock, I., & Horowitz, B. Child maltreatment and material deprivation among AFDC-recipient families. Social Service Review, June 1979, 153(2).	The public child welfare system must be modified so that it is more responsive to the families it is established to serve.
	Angler, S. et al. Research Task Force Report. Proceedings: 1978 National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect--New York City. Washington, DC: DHHS, Office of Human Development Services, May 1980. (Publication No. (OHDS) 80-30249) Pp. 102-105.	Need for controlled, systematic longitudinal studies involving exploration of many factors...with systematic followup on the careers of large representative groups of normal families.
Neglect is a form of cruelty that more often is caused or exaggerated by extreme poverty or ignorance. Abuse is related to deep-seated characterological or psychological causes rooted in the childhood experiences of abusing parents.	Zalba, S. The abused child. A typology for classification and treatment. Social Work, January 1967, 12(1), 70-79.	
Evaluation of elements essential in child care. Opinions in society are surprisingly unified...the kinds of behaviors that social workers see as neglectful also are seen as deviant by the neighbors of those who engage in such behaviors.	Polansky, N., & Williams, D. Class orientations to child neglect. Social Work, September 1978, 397-440.	Parents who have low standards of child care are probably demonstrating individual incapacity to provide better care rather than following norms sanctioned by the same reference group.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
II. Explanations of Maltreatment of Children and Youth A. Parental Problems and Background		
Economic stress is neither necessary nor sufficient to warrant abuse; rather, it is a defect in character structure that allows the aggressive impulses to be expressed freely...thus, psychiatric factors are judged to be of primary importance.	Kempe, C., Silverman, F., Steele, B., Droegemueller, W., & Silver, H. The battered child syndrome. Journal of the American Medical Association, 1962, 181, 17-24.	
Parental problems not as important as expected. Maltreating parents showed more emotional stress and showed more likelihood of another adult living in the house.	Wolock, I., & Horowitz, B., op. cit.	Relieving stress by the low material level of living more crucial than emotional factors.
Only a small proportion of abuses in general are caused by a sadistic psychopathological parent but a high proportion of lethal abuse is.	Friedman, R. Child abuse: A review of the psychological research. In Herman, et al. (Eds.), Four perspectives in the status of child abuse and neglect research. Washington, DC: National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect, 1976.	Essential to distinguish between abuse caused by pathological behavior and abuse which is essentially behavior of normal adults.
Assignment of perjorative labels and necessity of alleging parental wrongdoing is necessitated in order for the court to assume jurisdiction.	Stein, T.J. Grant application: Child welfare research on intake and decision processes, Chicago, IL: University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1979.	New standard needed for social work and judicial decision making....We must question the appropriateness of intervention caused solely by parental conditions.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Abuse is not product of psychologically disturbed parents, because normal parents use physical and corporal punishment, which is widely accepted in our society.	Gil, D.S. Child Abuse Prevention Act, op. cit.	Societal change would bring about reducing incidence of child abuse rather than focus on individual changes.
Predictive value of individual variables identified...is exceedingly limited... child maltreatment must be considered an interactive process.	Belsky, J. Child maltreatment: An ecological integration. American Psychologist, April 1980, 35(4), 320-335.	
Over half of abusive parents undergoing moderate or severe life crisis report severe physical punishment as children.	Conger, R.D. Family change and child abuse. Child abuse and neglect: Issues on innovations and implementations. Washington, DC: USDHEW, NCCAN 2d National Conference CA/N, 1977.	Changing family relationships where there is failure to meet role expectations provide basis for abuse if parent was punished severely as a child.
Punitive childhood history correlates with abusive or neglectful behavior in adulthood...only when coupled with high levels of stress resulting from excessive demands for coping with life change.	Conger, R.D., Burgess, R., & Barrett, C. Child abuse related to life change and perception of illness. Some preliminary findings. Family Coordinator, 1979, 28, 73-78.	
Inhibiting effect of pain feedback may be dependent on development of empathy.	Feshbach, N., & Feshback, S. The relationship between empathy and aggression in two age groups. Developmental Psychology, Vol. 7, 306-313.	May explain why the victimized child's pain and suffering does not inhibit abusive behavior.
Sense of power and/or compliance that follows aggressive act may serve to reinforce aggression.	Burgess, R. Child abuse: A behavioral analysis. In B. Lakel & Kazdiy (Eds.), Advances in child clinical psychology. New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1978.	Emotional deprivation noted by clinicians as characteristics of childhood of child abusers may very well be responsible for parent insensitivity to the pain they cause their victims.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Ontogenic development predisposes parent to maltreat their offspring.	Belsky, J., op. cit.	
All of control non-neglecting parents felt wanted as child; over 1/2 of neglected parents felt unwanted.	Polansky, N., Chalmers, M, Buttenweiser, R., & Williams, P. Isolation of the neglectful family. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 49, 149-152.	
Nurturance mothers reported receiving during their own childhood was one of the most consistent predictors of their child's own nonorganic failure to thrive in sample of 500 mothers studied from pregnancy through 2d year of child's life.	O'Connor, S., Altemeir, W., Sherrod, K., Sandler, A., & Vietze, P. Prospective study of nonorganic failure to thrive. San Francisco, CA: Society for Research in Child Development, March 1979.	
Physical abuse as child is insufficient itself to predict if one will be an abusive parent.	Wolock, I., & Horowitz, B., op. cit.	
Only minor support that children who are abused grow into abusing parents.	Zigler, E., & Seitz, V. Status of research on children, youth and families 1979. Washington, DC: DHHS Office of Human Development Services, August 1980. (DHHS Publication No. (OHDS) 80-30274) Pp. 153-170.	The fact that abusive or neglectful parents often report being abused or neglected as children does not explain the fact that most abused or neglected children do not abuse or neglect their children.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Abusive and neglectful parents' lack of knowledge and unrealistic expectations about children and their lack of child-rearing acumen...inappropriate values about relative legitimacy of their needs as compared with the child's and receive little support in making appropriate changes.	Parke, R., & Collmer, C. Child abuse: An interdisciplinary analysis. In E.M. Hetherington (Ed.), Review of child development research (Vol. 5). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1975. Pp. 509-590.	Role of caregiver requires reordering of priorities concerning the gratification of needs.
Abusive parents lack appropriate knowledge of childrearing...their child-rearing techniques set them apart from nonabusive parents...the abusing parents implement culturally accepted norms for raising children with an exaggerated intensity at an inappropriately early age.	Spinetta, J.J., & Rigler, D. The child abusing parent: A psychological review. Psychological Bulletin, 1972, 77, 296-304.	
Participation in both formal and informal social groups confirmed emerging picture of relative isolation among neglecting parents...neglecting parents revealed a previous history of social isolation in adolescence.	Polansky, N., Chalmers, H., Buttenweiser, R., & Williams, P., op. cit.	On the average, the neglectful parent was already starting to fall outside the mainstream in adolescence and can profit less from informal support systems that might prevent neglect.
Potentially neglectful mothers had much greater interaction with neighbors...no evidence that these women experienced extreme social isolation.	Billingsley, A., Giovannoni, J. & Purvine, M., op. cit.	Extensive neighborliness found among this group is in response to the many strains in their lives and lessened family support with reliance upon the nearest source of support which were neighbors.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Having relatives nearby was not associated with maternal adequacy, however, frequency and nature of contacts with these available relatives were. More adequate mothers had seen all of their relatives during the year. Less adequate mothers had seen few or no relatives at all.		If we consider the many strains on neglectful mothers and their relative lack of supports in the informal system--one might anticipate a heavier reliance upon community services to meet their children's needs.
II. Explanation of Maltreatment of Children and Youth B. Role of the Child and/or Youth		
Children who are subjected to abuse are more likely 1) to be abnormal at birth, 2) to be illegitimate, 3) to be the first child, 4) to come from a large family, and 5) to be subject to gross psychiatric, medical, and social pathology.	Baldwin, J.A., & Oliver, J.E. Epidemiology and family characteristics of severely abused children. British Journal of Preventive and Social Medicine, 1975, 29, 205-221.	Undertake to teach the general population essentials of child care and the normal course of child development...reduce incidence of child abuse by teaching parents how to parent.
Premature children experience a heightened incidence. Children small for their age are more likely to be abused.	Zigler, E., & Seitz, V., op. cit.	
Child is a participant in the interaction between parent and child in events preceding the abusive incident...not a spontaneous event in which the child has not taken actions that may or may not provoke the abuse.	Kadushin, A., Martin, J., & McGloin, J., op. cit.	Important for child protective services workers to listen carefully to parents to identify clearly the abusive interaction through eyes of the parents...withholding judgment until the incident with its antecedents are seen in context with each other.
No characteristics or composite of abused and neglectful children identified at intake.	Cohn, A. Evaluation of child abuse and neglect in demonstration projects 1974-77 (Vol. 1). Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Planning Associates, 1977.	

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Out of 20 battered infants, 1/3 were premature...more than 1/2 were mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed.	Elmer, E., & Gregg, G. Development characteristics of abused children. Pediatrics, 1967, 40.	Mother may perceive a child as abnormal simply because it is premature.
Premature infants had normal IQs. Most premature children are not abused.	Martin, J., Beezley, P., Conway, E., & Kempe, C. The development of abused children: A review of the literature and physical, neurological and intellectual findings. Advances in Pediatrics, 1974, 24, 25-73.	
The special child is at greater risk of abuse...current research does demonstrate that prematurity, physical handicaps, congenital malformations, and similar conditions are overrepresented in abused populations.	Friedrich, W., & Boriskin, J. The role of the child in abuse: A review of the literature. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, October 1976, 46(4).	Abuse is a product of a complex set of interactions, and assigning weights to any of its components is premature.
As age of the victim increases, the father is more likely to become the perpetrator than the mother. Adolescent cases tend to involve two parents instead of one.	Garbarino, J., & Carson, B. op. cit.	Supports contention that adolescent abuse and neglect is a separate phenonenon, and supports view that adolescent abuse contributes to the problem of runaways.
Younger victims more frequently are victims of severe abuse, and teenagers are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse as the 2d most serious type of abuse.		

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Economic status of families in adolescent abuse poses substantially higher than families of younger victims of abuse.		It appears that economic stress is not generally a contemporary factor in the life of families with adolescent victims
Half of abuse of adolescents is a recent event, not a continuation into adolescence of prior abusive behavior.		
Abused and neglectful adolescents are more likely to be labeled status offenders if referred to juvenile court and placed in an institutional setting if adjudicated.	Smith,C.P., Berkman, D., & Fraser, W. A preliminary national assessment of child abuse and neglect and juvenile justice system. Washington, DC: National Institute for Juvenile Justice Delinquency, April 1980.	More attention needs to be given to minimizing the impact on the child, particularly when victim of sexual abuse.
Abusive and neglectful family environments induce many adolescents to run away from home.	Fisher, B., & Berdie, J., op. cit.	
Adolescent abuse more than double the rate of younger children.	Westat, Inc., op. cit.	More attention needs to be paid to adolescent abuse and neglect.
C. Family Interaction		
Frequent observations that marital conflict and discord run high in abusive households.	Belsky, J., op. cit.	To fully understand the role of the chil in abuse can be achieved only by examini other aspects of the microsystem of the family.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Marital disruption and neglect associated in all groups (white, black and Latino).	Billingsley, A., & Giovannoni, J., & Purvine, M., op. cit.	Marital stress and conflict may simply spill over...contaminating the socialization process.
Children become targets of aggression when they intrude upon the spousal relationship...first child more likely target of abuse.	Balkan, D. Slaughter of the innocents: A study of the battered child phenomenon. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1971.	Parenting education may be most cost effective if focused on parents expecting their first child.
A child is a target of physical insults, he is part of the family, inevitably he is caught up in the stress and privation to which his family is prey.	Elmer, E. A follow-up study of traumatized children. In R. Browne, & E. Newberger (Eds.), Critical perspectives of child abuse. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1978.	
In 80% of abusive families neither parent takes responsibility for decisions ...live in disorganized homes with inconsistent discipline.	Young, L. Wednesday's children. New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 1964.	More adequate support and services to maintain children in their own homes would prevent some or most of the neglect of children.
Welfare food allowances for children in their own homes is less than is allowed by foster parents and considerably less than food allowances for children placed in institutions.		

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Determinants within the abusive family seem to be 1) the history of the acceptance of aggression toward children as acceptable, 2) the immediate antecedents that result in the abuse or neglect, and 3) the consequence that draws attention to the abusive or neglectful behavior.	Burgess, R. Project interact: A study of patterns of interaction in abusive, neglectful and control families. Final report. Washington, DC: DHEW, National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect, August 1978.	Change alone may not cause problems, but rather that particular sorts of change upset family equilibrium by disturbing the role expectations that parents have come to assume as just.
In certified abusive and neglectful families, there was less interaction between family members than there was in matched control families.		
Tolerance of stress and the family's skill in martialling its resources to cope with adversity can reach absolute levels of stress with which a family can no longer tolerate.	Belsky, J., op. cit.	This would partially explain why it is that among some families facing similar levels of social and economic privation, maltreatment occurs in some families and not others.
One-half of fathers experienced joblessness in the year preceding abuse.	Gil, D.S. Violence against children, op. cit. Belsky, J., op. cit.	Unemployment and resulting stress on family may be related to increased abuse of children in family. Powerlessness when father no longer functions as the family provider might fuel intrafamily violence.
D. Ethnic, Cultural and Societal Context		
Feelings of injustice alone will not produce aggression unless violent response has been learned as an appropriate behavior when one is frustrated.	Bandura, A. Aggression: A social learning analysis. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973.	

Findings	Source	Interpretation
In excess of 90% of parents reported employing physical force in upbringing of their children.	Stark, R., & McEvoy, J. Middle-class violence. Psychology Today, November 1970, 52-65.	
	Gil, D.S. Pediatrics, op. cit.	Need to establish clear-cut prohibitions against use of physical force in child-rearing.
25% of mothers were spanking infants before age of 6 months; almost 50% were spanking children by age 12 months.	Korsch, B., Christian, J., Gozzi, E., & Carlson, P. Infant care and punishment: A pilot study. American Journal of Public Health, December 1965, 55, 1880-1888.	One major factor contributing to high level of parent-child violence is the normative acceptability of hitting one's own children.
Close correlation of abusive parents... and characteristics of lower class impoverished families.	Elmer, E. A follow-up study of traumatized children, op. cit.	Childrearing among lower class involves children being repeatedly subjected to uncontrolled aggression at the hand of their caretakers.
48% of reported abuse cases earned less than $5,000 a year.	Gil, D.S. Violence against children, op. cit.	
SES deprived families use physical force in rearing their children more than middle class.	Gil, D.S. Pediatrics, op. cit.	
63% of 5,993 abusive incidents were the result of accidental disciplinary measures.	Viano, E.C. Attitudes toward child abuse among American professionals. Toronto, Canada: International Society for Research on Aggression, 1974.	Need to penalize corporal punishment for all parents.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Social class predominate factor in growth of child...no evidence that child abuse affected development of child.	Elmer, E. Fragile families, troubled children: The aftermath of infant trauma. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977.	Two-thirds of police, clergy, and educators condone spanking; 10% believed in using belts, straps, and brushes as acceptable for maintaining control.
The most severe injuries occurred in single-parent homes and were inflicted by the mother.	Garbarino, J. A preliminary study of some ecological correlates of child abuse: The impact of socioeconomic stress on mothers. Child Development, 1976, 47, 178-185.	Demonstrates the pervasive and insidious effects of the combination of being poor and attempting to manage a household with only one parent.
Large proportion poor, single-parent families with the father absent.	Kadushin, A., Martin, J., & McGloin, J., op. cit.	
Community disorganization directly generates both economic stress for mother and abusive behavior.	Garbarino, J., op. cit	Supporting systems should focus on providing income supports, child care services and educational development for poor, single-parent families.
Poor families overburdened with everyday demands of life...no time or energy to cultivate relationships that support the parental role and/or family unit.	Gottlieb, B. The role of individual and social support in preventing child maltreatment. in J. Garbarino & H. Stocking (Eds.), Protecting children from abuse and neglect. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1980.	Financial barriers to good child care ought to be removed.
Abuse phenomenon seen as an extreme form of culturally accepted style of child-rearing.	Steele, B.F., & Pollock, C.B. A psychiatric study of parents who abuse infants and small children. In R.E. Helfer & C.H. Kempe (Eds.), The battered child. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1968.	Use suitable role models such as trained parent volunteers, paraprofessionals or lay therapists who have had positive parenting experiences to provide supportive services.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Institutional abuse of black children is serious problem that continues unabated.	Tetch, N. et al. Black family task force report. Proceedings: 1978 National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect--New York City. Washington, DC: DHHS Office of Human Development Services, May 1980. (Publication No. (OHDS) 80-30249).	Need to treat abuse and neglect in the black family as separate problem, which many believe is directly or indirectly result of institutional racism prevalent in American society. Need to fund programs that focus on institutional abuse, provide a guaranteed annual income for all families and comprehensive health insurance.
High visibility, poverty and racism result in overreporting of black families.		
White controlled agencies and institutions lacked a real understanding of the structure and needs of the black family and often imposed inappropriate solutions to misunderstood problems.		Programs needed that recognize and utilize informal family networks, provide legal recognition of current extra-legal kinship bonds and provide an emphasis on concrete help with less casework.
By all measures of social-economic status, abusive parents most had members in the highest status positions...higher income, independent source of income, with male head who had gone beyond high school...neglect families placed significantly lower in social-economic status.	Billingsley, A., Giovannoni, J., & Purvine, M., op. cit.	
Black families predominated the adequate care group...but also the poorest and most likely to be on welfare.		Poverty exposes parents to the increased likelihood of additional stress which may have deleterious effects upon the capacity to adequately care for their children.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Among black mothers, mutual aid activity such as babysitting and housecleaning appeared to be an important category.		For the practitioner, increased emphasis on the manipulation of the environment of poor neglectful mother...with supportive services such as the child protective services worker faces a stalemate.
A higher proportion of neglectful white mothers was on welfare. There was no relationship between source of income and neglect for black or Latino families.		Programs must encompass efforts to alleviate at least some of the ravages of poverty.
Chicano family roles appear strong with support systems but need reinforcement in lieu of majority cultural domination.	Zapata, G. et al. Hispanic task force report. Proceedings: 1978 National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect--New York City. Washington, DC: DHHS Office of Human Development Services, 1980. (Publication No. 80-30249).	More effective programs make use of extended family networks present in the Chicano, Mexican and Puerto Rican family culture.
There are significant differences that have emerged between 1.7 million Puerto Ricans living on the Mainland and the 3.7 million living in Puerto Rico.		Need to emphasize linkages to the majority culture rather than change the basic patterns of family life.
Characteristic reactions of the Puerto Rican family to certain situations; e.g., explosive release of emotion in a stress situation...have not demonstrated negative consequences within the cultural context of the family.		

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Most workers involved with Hispanic families are from other cultural backgrounds resulting in communication being a common problem.		Services must be available generally in Spanish and work with Hispanics in a culturally responsive way.
Lack of academic and other professional training which adequately prepares the non-Hispanic as well as the Hispanic service providers with skills to treat adequately the Hispanic family.		Academic programs need to be prepared to train professionals to work effectively with various Hispanic groups.
Families of European ethnic origins undergo cultural conflicts and intrusions similar to those of other minority families in attempting to deal with the majority culture.	Giordano, J. et al. European ethnic task force. Proceedings: 1978 National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect--New York City. Washington, DC: DHHS Office of Human Development Services, 1980. (Publication No. (OHDS) 80-30249). Pp. 67-74.	Natural support systems and resources exist that can be expanded while still assuring cultural integrity.
There has been a persistence of ethnicity with over 100 million Americans (white and nonwhite) who identify with an ethnic group.		Ethnic consciousness has stimulated the necessary process of redefining our society as pluralistic in nature.
Each ethnic group has its own cultural behavioral patterns and its own diversity that make it unique.		Policies and programs must incorporate a sensitivity and responsiveness to ethnic differences.
For many, the inability to express themselves in English presents problems in communication.		Need to undertake research relevant to the ethnic variable in child abuse and neglect.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Children of ethnic families are experiencing cultural contradictions between the larger society and their family culture. Parents are becoming unsure of themselves in their parent role and find themselves having to learn adaptive techniques from their children.		Support self-help, mutual aid, education, and prevention programs to achieve greater family stability among the ethnic groups.
E. Ecological Integration as an Explanation of Maltreatment of Children and Youth		
Ecological space defined as: a) what takes place in the context of the immediate household b) forces at work in the larger social systems in which the family's embedded c) overriding cultural beliefs and values	Bronfenbrenner, U. The ecology of human development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.	Need to move beyond mere identification of individual variables that are correlated to study relationships between variables.
There is a structural relationship between individual, familial, community and cultural factors that have not been implicated by others as causative agents in the maltreatment process.	Belsky, J., op. cit.	Teams of researchers at several levels need to undertake coordinated investigations.
Support systems...have been linked to maltreatment of children whenever research has been designed to identify them.	Garbarino, J., op. cit.	More attention needs to be given to factors for improving functioning of support systems for parents.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
	Garbarino, J. The human ecology of child maltreatment: A conceptual model for research. Journal of Marriage and the Family, November 1977, 721-735.	Child abuse can occur only when feedback and support are not being adequately addressed to persons in the role of caregiver.
The potential for preventing and creating child abuse differs from one neighborhood to another.	Warren, D.I., op. cit.	Practitioners need to recognize the typology of neighborhoods...identifying those persons who comprise the natural problem solving methods of a given neighborhood.
III. Systemic Dysfunctions in Handling Maltreatment Cases A. Reporting of Maltreatment		
Social workers who determine the validity of a reported maltreatment case appear to respond more to the social status of the reporter than to the seriousness or the way in which the case was received.	Carr, A. Social worker response to the status of those reporting child maltreatment: A study of multiple gatekeeping. Providence, RI: University of Rhode Island, 1980. (Unpublished)	It appears that an important gatekeeping role is maintained by professionals in the process of labeling a child as maltreated.
Professionals lack awareness of child protective services reporting requirements and demonstrate resistance to reporting when known.	Nagi, S., op. cit.	
Scarcity of resources results in low reporting.	Smith, C.P., Berkman, D., & Fraser, W., op. cit.	

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Reported families are locked into the formal systems of agencies and professionals which prevent natural support systems from operating.	Warren, D.I., op. cit.	
Initial recipient of report single most influential variable as to whether children reported as abused or neglected are removed from homes. 87% of children reported initially to police were removed from their homes compared with 7% initiatally reported to Child Protective Services.	Sussman, A., & Cohen, S. Reporting child abuse and neglect: Guidelines for legislation. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Co, 1975.	The entire success of a reporting statute is contingent on the nature of the agency charged with receiving reports.
78% of reports to the police occurred after hours.	Brown, H.F., Burke, P., Kilbane, J.T., & Miller, B. Policies and practices of the Child Protective Services System in Cook County: Final report. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1979.	Reports to law enforcement of child maltreatment heightened the probability of emergency protective custody and arrest of parent.
	Brown, H.F., Miller, B., & Burke, P. A study of policies and practices of the Cook County Justice System in child abuse and neglect. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1977.	Police have capabilities of immediate 24-hour response to reports of child maltreatment.
B. Removal of Maltreated Children and Youth from Their Homes		
50% of neglect proceedings (inclusive of abuse and neglect) results in removal of child (or youth) from the home of the natural parents.	Institute of Judicial Administration, op. cit.	Coercive intervention should be limited to situations where child has suffered or is likely to suffer serious maltreatment.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
43% of validated cases of abuse and neglect resulted in placement (four California counties).	Giovannoni, J., & Becerra, R., op. cit.	
Lack of decision criteria regarding removal of children results in either risk to children's safety, unnecessary placement and trauma for child, and/or undue harrassment of families.	Nagi, S., op. cit.	Temporary placement is one of the weakest aspects of intervention in behalf of maltreated children.
Removal of child portrayed as helpful by agencies when it is really perceived as punitive by parents.	Ibid.	Need to move toward decision making criteria standardization of definition and routinization of decision making.
Children placed in emergency situations tend to remain in placement regardless of severity of abusive or neglectful incident.	Shireman, J., Miller, B., Burke, P., & Brown, H.F. Initial report recipient and continuing service patterns in child abuse and neglect cases. Child Welfare (in press).	Law enforcement is unaware, while child welfare agencies are more aware, of the consequences of the child or youth taken from the home of the natural parent.
Most common service was the placement of child in care of others.	Shapiro, D. Parents and protectors: A study in child abuse and neglect. New York, NY: Child Welfare League of America, Inc., 1979.	
Differing agency philosophy rather than case characteristics seen as determining decision to remove child.	Shireman, J., Miller, B., Burke, P., & Brown, H.F., op. cit.	

Findings	Source	Interpretation
	Zapata, G. et al., op. cit.	Legal action to remove a child should be seen only as the last resort.
C. Involvement of Law Enforcement and Use of Criminal Prosecution		
In approximately half of the states, agencies other than the Department of Social Services (usually law enforcement) are mandated to receive reports.	American Humane Association. Editorial. National Child Protective Services Newsletter. Denver, CO: AHA Children's Division, 1979.	Suggests that legislation is based on a determination that CPS agencies are not capable of 24-hour coverage, or a lingering interpretation that child protection is a law enforcement rather than a social service problem.
Police-investigated reports result in higher placement rates than those investigated by child welfare agencies regardless of severity of the incident, family characteristics, or other attributes of case processing.	Miller, B., Shireman, J., Burke, P., & Brown, H.F. Emergency placement and initial report recipients in child abuse and neglect cases. Research in Social Welfare (in press).	
Police are the only agency with 24-hour response capability. County attorney expects police to carry out the investigation on the grounds that a social services staff is not trained to gather evidence of legal value.	Holmes, M., & Tapper, O. Child abuse and neglect programs: Practice and theory. Washington, DC: DHEW National Institute of Mental Health, 1977.	Where child abuse program is effective means for delivery of services and a strong relationship with the county attorney's office, prosecution in criminal courts is less common.
Police have no established guidelines, they lack training, they are not equipped to make the decisions they are often required to make regarding the welfare of a child.	Nagi, S., op. cit.	

Findings	Source	Interpretation
There is a wide variance in response of police to child abuse and neglect from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.	Sussman, A., & Cohen, S., op. cit.	Majority of child caring experts concur that police-initiated type of investigation would impede efforts to help the family or the child.

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CHILDREN AND YOUTH AT RISK

Prepared by: DHHS Staff

Findings	Source	Interpretation
Stresses Common to High Risk Families		
The most prevalent stresses for a population of multistressed families at risk of child maltreatment were found to be: isolation (63%), dysfunctional behavior (48%), poverty level income (45%), poor coping ability (45%), depression (41%), parent abused as child (38%), and the presence of a developmentally delayed child (37%).	Armstrong, K.A. A treatment and educational program for parents and children who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Paper submitted for presentation to the International Conference on Child Abuse, Amsterdam, Holland, April 1981.	This finding is consistent with other available research in the area of child maltreatment. It is interesting to note that of these seven stress factors, only one is absolutely not amenable to intervention.
Intervention Methodology		
A multidiscipinary, multiphased, ecological intervention methodology is effective in preventing child maltreatment in a high risk population.	Ibid.	An effective prevention strategy is one in which multiple interventions utilizing several disciplines occur simultaneously.
An effective approach should combine family stress reduction, improvement in parent-child interaction patterns, and enhancement of a child's development.		
People Needing Social Services Children and Youth at Risk		
The most frequent and important problems presented by developmentally disabled children and their families to social service agencies were:	Interim Report #2. Results of the National Program and Training Surveys of Services to Developmentally Disabled Children and Their Families.	The special needs for home management of the developmentally disabled child present problems of stress for his/her family.

Findings	Source	Interpretation
-alternative living arrangements -respite care -behavior management -educational placement, and -transportation.	Project #54-P-71690/4-02 Improved social services to families with developmentally disabled children through training and technical assistance to Title XX caseworkers. Project Director: Mary Ockerman. Grantee: Human Development Program 101 Kinkead Hall University of Kentucky Lexington KY 40506.	Social service workers need training unique to these needs in order to reduce the stress and risk faced by these families.
71% of the services offered by State social services agencies were described as inadequate to meet the needs of the developmentally disabled population.		Training and technical assistance in areas of service planning and provision need to be provided to improve service delivery. Training and technical assistance in interagency activities are necessary to improve the quality of services delivery.